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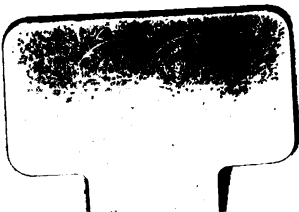
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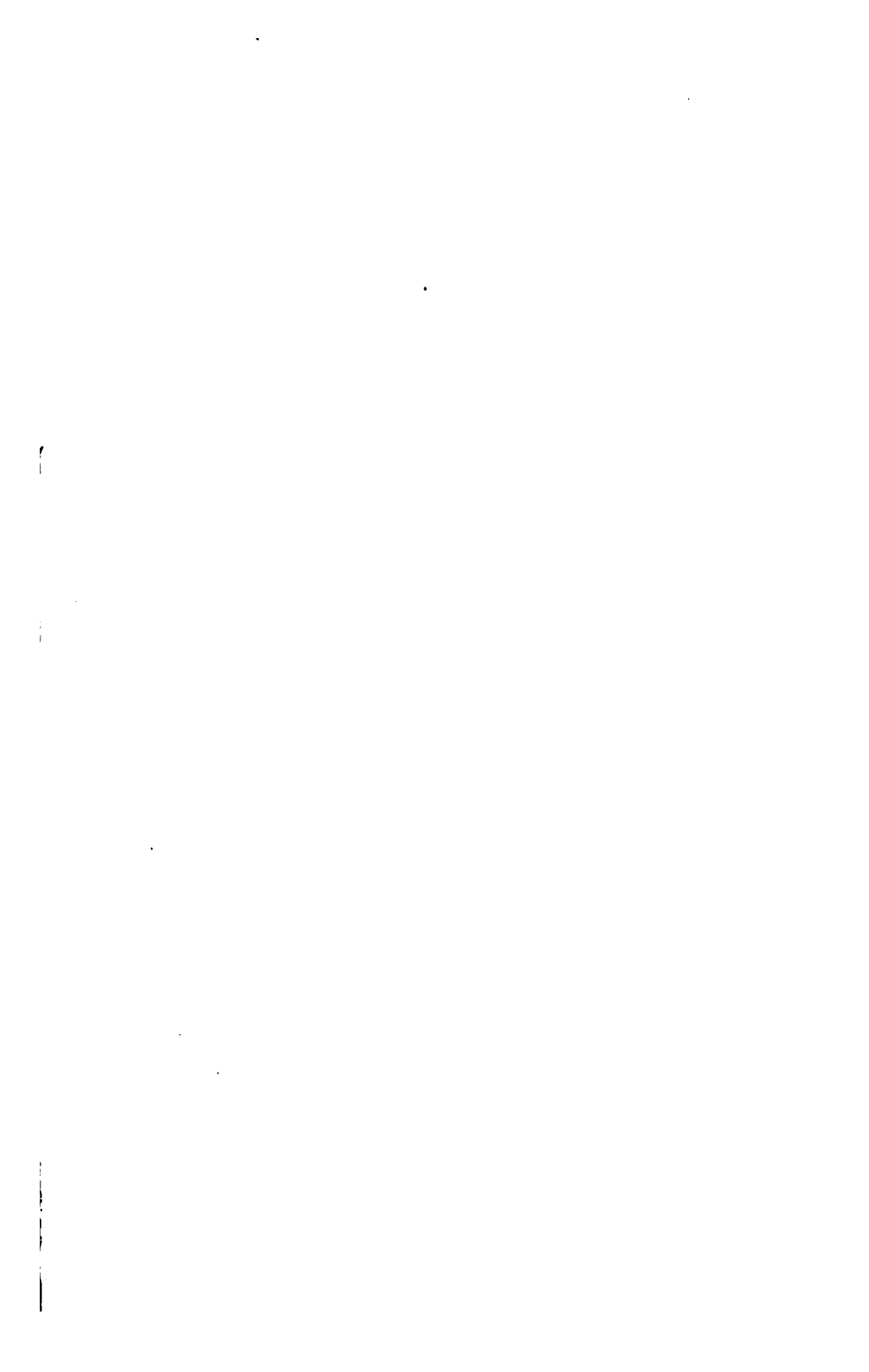
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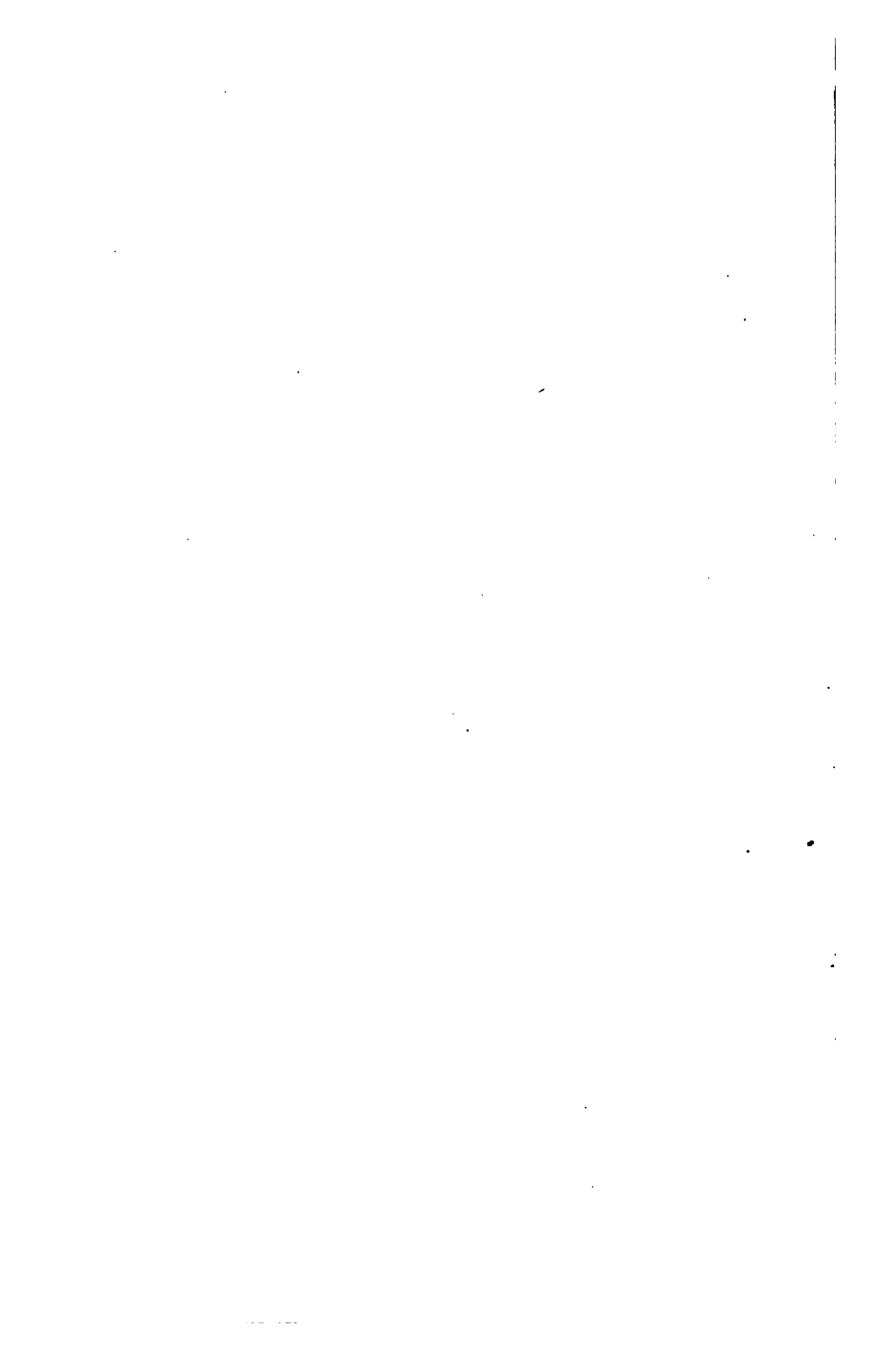
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J. Scott

A
D I A L O G U E,
I N
TWO CONVERSATIONS,

BETWEEN
A Gentleman, a Pauper, and his Friend,

INTENDED AS
An ANSWER to a PAMPHLET,

Published by the Rev. Mr. POTTER,

INTITLED
OBSERVATIONS on the POOR LAWS,

ON THE
Present State of the Poor, and on Houses of Indust:

By THOMAS MENDHAM,

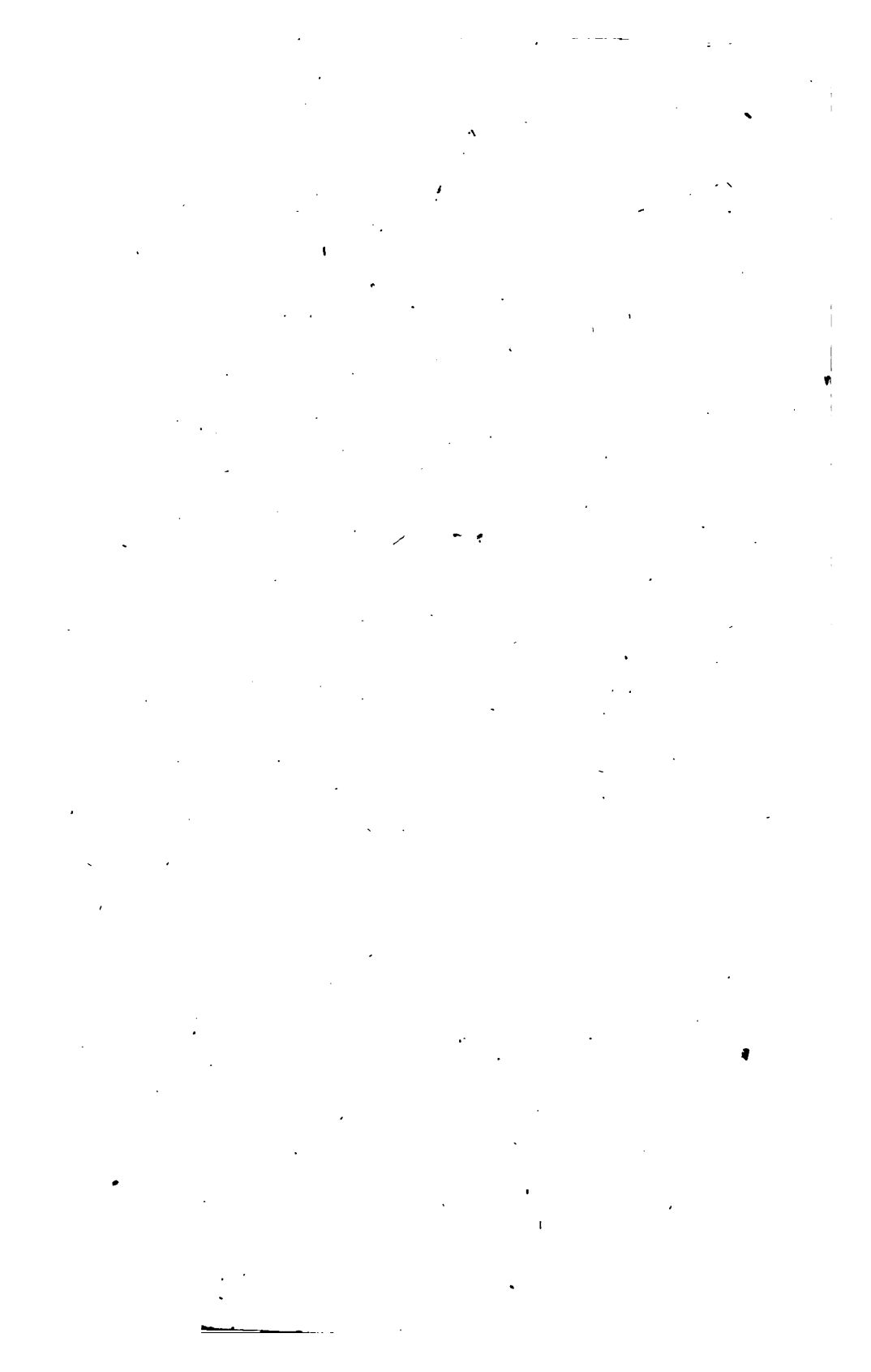
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232. e. 86.





T O
T H E G E N T L E M E N
O F T H E
K I N G D O M O F E N G L A N D ,
P A R T I C U L A R L Y
T O T H E G E N T L E M E N
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B Y
T H E I R M O S T O B E D I E N T
H U M B L E S E R V A N T ,

Briston,
Feb. 3, 1775,

T. Mendham.

10

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A
DIALOGUE, &c.

THE PERSONS.

CLERICUS a Gentleman, JOHN a Pauper,
MEANWELL his Friend.

CONVERSATION I

Gentleman.

GOOD-Morrow Mr. *Meanwell*; good-morrow neighbour *John*. Whither so fast this morning?

Pau. I'm going, ant' please ye Maister, to Dereham, to hear what the gentlefolks will do with we poor people.

Gent. I'm going there myself, to give all the assistance in my power to the miserable Poor in the hundreds of MITFORD AND LAUNDITCH.

Pau.

Pau. I have no obligation against you Maister, I wish you luck; I always thought you a friend to the Poor.

Gent. Not only inclination, but our duty, our interest incline us to befriend them; for it must be confessed * “our domestic safety and comfort, our private wealth and prosperity, our national riches, strength and glory, are greatly dependant on an industrious and well ordered Poor.” (P. 1.).

Pau. Why I believe Maister all comes from us as you say.

Gent. Therefore “a proper attention to their morals and support will always be the concern of every wise and good administration.” (P. 1.)

Pau. Ay to be sure, and as to that, if folks was but as good as they are wise we should see better times than we do, as the man said.

Gent. Perhaps you mistake the matter *John*, “the Laws themselves are made an occasion of the evils we complain of,” (P. 62.) and till some remedy is applied the indigent Poor must suffer.

* The Rev. Mr. Potter’s words in his Observations on the Poor Laws, &c. are included in reversed commas, and the pages from whence they are taken are between parenthesis at the end of each quotation.

Pau.

Pau. It may be as you say Maister for aught I know, notoutstanding I always thought the Laws good enough if they had but been minded.

Gent. You may suppose so because you are ignorant of their numerous defects; I might observe, if you could understand me, that the "celebrated Act," (P. 13.) which received its "finished form" (P. 12.) in the 43d. of the famous maiden Queen Elizabeth, "the Law by which the Poor "have ever since been ordered and supported," (P. 12.) is very defective.

Pau. Like enof as you say; but let us hear now what fault you find upon't.

Gent. Well *John* I will tell you. One defect in that Statute is, that "no power "is given the Magistrate to compel the "Overseers—to set the poor on work." (P. 15.)

Pau. Well, but notoutstanding, I knows if a poor man can get no work, as how the Justice can make him be relieved till he ha got work agen, and so 'tis as broad as 'tis long, as the saying is.

Gent. "No power is given for hiring or "erecting a common House for such "work." (P. 15.)

Pau. What d'ye mean a House to plow, sow, and pull turnips in?

Gen. No *John*, I mean an House to work "flax, hemp, wool, iron," (P. 15.) &c. in.

Pau. As to that, if they cou'd I don't see 'twould help us a deal, not outstanding 'tmight do well enof in the city or large towns, where they have a mort of your wavers and combers; but you knows as how the "village Poor" (P. 15.) are almost all "labourers in husbandry:" (P. 15.) we know nothing about your hemp and flax not we, and so I fancy this don't much concern us Maister.

Gen. But you ought to consider that "the unemployed labourer, has no provision in his favour; he shall not be relieved because he is able; no one is compell'd to employ him, therefore he must beg, or steal, or starve." (P. 15.)

Pau. Well Maister, it may be as you say for aught I knows, for I can't read the Laws not I, and so 'tis not to be imagined I can compute the matter wi'ye; but here's my friend *Meanwell*, he can talk to ye if ye like, for he ye knows is a kind of a schollard as they call um.

Gen.

Gen. I have no objection to Mr. *Meanwell, John*; I shall have pleasure if he will give himself the trouble in a friendly manner to canvass the matter with me.

Mean. How far it may be pleasurable to you or me to canvass the matter in agitation relative to the Poor, I am not able to determine; the less so Sir, because your sentiments are known, your Observations on the Poor Laws have fully display'd them; I have read your Tract with great attention; believe it the production of an able head, an humane heart: It may be my misfortune, it is not my fault, that I differ in my judgment with you, especially upon the subject of Houses of Indury. That "unconquerable aversion to "them" (P. 35.) that has taken up its residence in the breast of almost every Pauper in the two Hundreds, is I confess, a transient guest with me; nor have all the powerful arguments adopted, nor all the high commendation bestowed in favour of these new institutions, hitherto been able to dislodge it.

Gen. It may be so, but you'll acknowledge that our Poor Laws are very defective I presume.

Mean. Some defects that have been stated, no doubt Sir, are real, others I presume are little more than imaginary.

Gent. Suppose, for instance, neighbour *John* was unemployed, I say "he has no provision in his favour; he shall not be relieved (*as I told him*) because he is able: no one is compelled to employ him, therefore he must beg, or steal, or starve." (P. 15.)

Mean. This I conceive Sir, is one of the defects that exist in imagination only; you may remember that every Magistrate has * power to order suitable relief to the Poor, oath being made of some matter which he shall judge to be a reasonable cause. Suppose therefore pauper *John*, or any other person unemployed and unable to maintain his family, if he applies to a Magistrate and makes oath of the fact, he shall be relieved, his family shall be supported, he need not beg, steal or starve.

Paul. Tha's all right Maister *Meanwell*, for I can tell ye as how, when I was out of work a month excessively o' the hard weather, Squire *Friendly* the Justice, order'd me six shillings a week till I could

* Stat. 9 Geo. 4 c. 7.

get work agen, and I had it too, and so I say God blefs his Honour, tha's all

Gent. But there is much, very much to be done before the Magistrate can be applied to, for "by our present Laws (*not the Magistrates, but*) the Churchwardens and Overseers are the legal Guardians of the Poor; should these be cruel, oppressive, or dead to pity, the Poor may apply to a Vestry; but in most parishes such meeting is held but once in the month, in many but twice in the year. They may apply to the two Overseers; but these may live at a distance, may be difficult to be found, may refuse the Poor access to their presence, mean time hunger becomes more clamorous and importunate every hour, sickness continues its ravages with uncontroul'd fury. What then is perishing misery to do?" (P. 19, 20.)

Mean. According to this account, perishing misery must do very much; but let us examine these alarming objections—Application may be made "to a Vestry; but in most parishes such meeting is held but once in the month, in many but twice in the year." I might observe
the

the * Churchwardens and Overseers in every parish are bound to hold a Vestry at least once a month, in the church on Sunday; and that if they omit so to do, or are negligent in their office, they are liable to a penalty of 20s. for every default, to the Poor: but I rather chuse to answer it is not essentially necessary to apply to a Vestry, they need only apply to the two Overseers; "but these may live "at a distance," the one may possibly live two miles from the other, (a circumstance not very common) and in that case a delay may be occasioned of—half an hour. "They may be difficult to be found." If they should hide themselves in ivy, or like royal Charles in a well claded oak, it will be difficult to find them indeed; but few Overseers I presume play with the Poor at bo-peep. "They may deny "the Poor access to their presence;" yes, but the question is what they do, not what they may do; certainly they may cloister themselves in their houses, may imprison themselves from Easter to Easter to keep out of the way of the Poor, and incur a penalty for neglecting their office;

* See Stat. 43 Eliz. C. 1, S. 1, 2, 6, 11.

but

but I beg leave to observe Sir, our judgment ought not to be biaſſed by the many defects, inconveniences and diſadvantages that a fertile genius and a flowing pen may point out in theory; but we are rather to have recourſe to thoſe that generally prevail in practice: I had much rather hear of the things that are, than of thoſe that may be; and ſo far as I remember you have not illuſtrated the many defects and inconveniences above repeated by a ſingle inſtance, but imagine that all the above difficulties exiſted in their full ſtrength; and hedged up the Pauper's way, kept him at a diſtance from his wiſh'd for relief. It is eaſy to turn this little battery of inconveniences againſt your favorite ſcheme, and to play off the ſmall pounders with ſome effect. Give me leave Sir, in the abſence of a better engineer to manage the artillery, and I hope without much difficulty, to make them bear upon Houſes of Induſtry. Suppoſe then this heavenly inſtitution adopted throughout the kingdom, and every hundred bleſſ'd with an aſylum for the poor——

Pau.

Paul. What's that you say Maister *Meanwell*? D'ye call a workhouse hafen! A faggs if that thare be your hafen I hope I shall never come into't.

Mean. You interrupt me *John*.—Suppose I say that Houses of Industry were erected in every hundred; and a Pauper on some emergent occasion or sickness stood in need of relief; I presume power must be lodged in the Overseers of every parish to relieve the Poor upon such sudden occasions, till the next monthly or other meeting of the Guardians. My supposition is either right or wrong. If wrong, and no such power should be vested in the Officers, the Poor in the above cases will be abundantly more distressed than under the present Poor Laws; their case will be worse. If right it will not be better; for then the Pauper cannot “apply to a Vestry,” vestry meetings for those purposes will be totally laid aside; he may however to “the two Overseers,” but there's the old evil still; “these may be cruel, oppressive, and dead to pity;” “may live at a distance, may be difficult to be found, may refuse the Poor access to their presence;” the Magistrate may not be applied to, his power will be taken away;

away; he may go to the House, but his necessity arises from some sudden emergency; it is not proper; he is not willing; or if sick, the House is at many miles distance, he cannot be removed; "mean time hunger becomes more clamorous and importunate every hour, sickness continues its ravages with uncontroul'd fury; what then is perishing misery to do?" (P. 20.)

Gent. At worst he can only suffer till admitted into the House, at present 'tis hard to say how long he may endure; for "suppose your *Overseers* found, suppose them summoned, suppose them ordered to relieve, the delinquents themselves are to execute that order; they set the order at defiance: they appeal to the Quarter Sessions, that may be three months distant: must the poor man and his distressed family continue starving all the time?—Alas! there is no remedy." (P. 26.)

Mean. Indeed! if so, by the help of a "MAY BE" a ready way is found to starve all the Poor in the Kingdom, and a much quicker, as well as cheaper way of dispatching them, than "Mr. Gee's famous scheme of sending them to the Golp-
"nies."

"nies." (P. 32.) If a practice, fraught with the worst evils, was countenanced, and Overseers in general are as cruel, as oppressive, as vile and dead to pity as they are represented, I wonder the — should not put it in their heads to shake off the intolerable burden, for they might all conspire to allow their respective poor no relief at all. The Magistrates may combine to compel them; they may "set the orders at defiance," they may "appeal to the Quarter Sessions," that "may be three months distant;" three months will starve them all; if they live three months without food, they'll live without forever, and in either cases may be kept cheap enough. Away, then, with the House at "Bulcamp," an unnecessary, unwieldy building, erected and furnished at the enormous expence of 10,000l. to very little purpose. Has it in the space of "eight years saved 3000l." Has it lowered the Poor (Rate 1 "2s. 5d. 2d per pound?" (P. 13?)) But by the above manoeuvre more may be done in three months; the Poor Raths would be reduced to nothing, till the able Poor became impotent, and the industrious incapable; and even then they might be sent off

off the same way, for "there is no remedy."

Para. Why, how's that Master *Mumwell*; do ye mean to make a famine among us? a faggs I wish you han't tarr'd with the same stick as other folks, as the Boy said.

Meam. No *John*, I speak with an air of pleasantry, because I conceive the practice of appealing from the order of the Magistrate made for the relief the Poor, can never be countenanced. I apprehend that the Magistrate under our present system of the Poor Laws, is the friend, the protector of the indigent and distressed; that he has power to order suitable relief; that the Poor are in no great danger from any appeal that may lie from such orders: First, because what Overseers are hardy or foolish enough to appeal? Secondly, because if any should dare to do so, they may assure themselves the Sessions will set their face against the appeal, and at least confirm the order. Thirdly, because it may be questioned, whether the order is not binding till set aside by the Sessions. Lastly, because the proviso in the † Sta-

† 17 Geo. II. Ch. 38, S. 4.

tute upon which such appeal must be founded, seems to be intended not so much for the benefit of the Parish Officers as of the Poor: the express words are, If any person shall be agrieved by any thing done or omitted by the Churchwardens and Overseers, or by any of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace, he may, giving reasonable Notice to the CHURCHWARDENS AND OVERSEERS appeal to the next General Quarter Sessions.

Gent. Suppose the advantage of the proviso was intended for the Poor as you conjecture, those who most deserve the benefit are little the better, either for that, or for their right of appeal to the Magistrates themselves, for its often seen that "great distresses are silent. The modesty of fearful poverty is unwilling to accuse; and who can say what numbers have sunk in uncomplaining silence to an untimely grave? Often have I seen the eloquent tear stand trembling in the eye of injured indigence, whilst the tongue made no complaint." (P. 20.)

Pau. A faggs Maister' tha's right; I begin to like ye sorely now. Why there's my poor Nan ha' cry'd a hundred-times, and ha' lost a mort of Elicant tears as ye call

call 'em, about this new fangled-Work-house; and than my poor little babes are all gotten round her a crying too, and I cry myself sometime and can't help it, that I can't. I'm fartin Maister 'twould make your hair stand up o'the ends to hear us all. Notoutstanding I pluck up my poor heart; I hope I tell' em we sha'n't come there, for I had rather follow poor Nan and my babes to the grave than to the Workhouse as they call it.

Gent. I find then *John* as well as others
 “ have been taught, wickedly taught to
 “ look upon *an Industry House* as a Work-
 “ house, and more severe; hence their
 “ minds are terrified with the apprehen-
 “ sions of cruel whippings, imprisonments,
 “ chains, dungeons,

“ Gorgons, and Hydras, and Chimeras, dire.” (P. 55.)

Mean. As many of the parties FOR and AGAINST the intended Industry House are of the first rank and character, and as I cannot suppose you would intentionally cast a reflection upon a body of respectable Personages, because they differ with you upon the utility of a public measure, I could wish the epithet “ WICKED” had not slipped from your pen; it is the only instance

instance throughout the controversy of warmth or loss of temper. It is natural to suppose the Gentlemen for the question will tell us the BEST, the Gentlemen against the question the WORST of an Industry House; but if they both confine themselves within the limits of truth, I cannot see much wickedness in the matter. Indeed should any man, or number of men, attempt to force a measure upon us contrary to our wills; should a minority carry a point against a majority of interested persons; should a few by an Act of Power compel, should they force many to the execution of a scheme, which in effect would indirectly tax, incumber, yea mortgage their property real and personal, I know not what one might call THIS: but to tell the Poor that an Industry House is a Workhouse, that they must lose their liberty, and that they may be whipt, I think THAT amounts to no more than the truth, whether the building be called a Workhouse, or Industry House; the name alters not the thing. In every such House the able Poor are to work, they ought to work. You have told us, "The work-rooms are busy scenes of
" cheerful

"cheerful industry;" (P. 43.) and for the rest I conceive every such House is A PRISON; the turn-key would not scruple to affirm it. 'Tis no chimera to tell them they must lose their liberty, or in other words they will be imprisoned; the gloomy fact is realized the moment they are admitted. They must not, they CANNOT stir without the walls until leave is obtained for that purpose. The Guardians also in the very nature of their administration, must have a discretionary power to reform the indolent; to punish the refractory. If they punish at all, will they do less than confine them to a narrow space; whether as dark as a dungeon, or as light as a lantern is little to our purpose. If they will not yet amend, the Guardians I suppose may order them to be whipt: but if after all their "laziness is incorrigible, their ferociousness not to be subdued," (P. 60.) they may suffer more, be punished worse at second hand; in short, they may be "consigned over to severer laws, and destined

T O

"PERPETUAL CONFINEMENT,

A N D

"PERPETUAL LABOUR." (P. 60.)

C

Pardon

Pardon me Sir, when I remind you the last two short lessons are taught by yourself. Whether "perpetual confinement, "and perpetual labour" are punishments "more severe" than even the "indolent "and ferocious" Poor are liable to under our present Poor Laws, let the world determine; mean time I am so far from being warm, that I highly commend your openness and probity: I cannot discern a syllable in the two sentences tinged with the least wickedness; I believe they are words, weighty words of truth and earnestness.

Gent. I shall mention another defect, that I dare say you'll allow to be a grievance; by Stat. 43 Eliz. "such as shall "not employ themselves to work, being "so appointed, the Justices may send to "the House of Correction, or common "Goal of the county, and this I presume "on the complaint of the Overseer; the "complaint may be partial, may be aggravated; if it be just the punishment "is disproportionate to the offence; it is "the punishment of felons: this cannot "be right." (P. 16.)

Mean.

Mean. I cordially agree with you Sir, "the punishment is disproportionate to the offence," therefore it "cannot be right;" but I really am surprized at this observation, because altho' the Act of Eliz. in consigning the lazy to the "punishment of felons" wears an air of cruelty, yet that cruelty is a tender mercy compared with their punishment under the proposed new administration. Elizabeth was content to COMMIT the indolent; she thought confinement a sufficient punishment for laziness. The new plan proposes not only CONFINEMENT, but what the incorrigible lazy think abundantly worse, LABOUR; that Law will only confine them for A TIME, this FOR EVER: the sentence is gone forth, let them be destined "to perpetual confinement, and perpetual labour." Now Sir, if the first "cannot be right," the last is wrong enough.

Gent. I have further to observe: "No provision is made for educating the children of the Poor, and training them up in habits of industry and the principles of religion. This is a radical defect."

• *Mean.* It is so, and we are bound to acknowledge you have prescribed a radical cure, a cure to be effected without the shadow of an Industry House. "To remedy this a proper school should be erected in every parish, under the direction of well qualified persons, to which all the Poor of that parish should be obliged to send their children constantly. They should be taught to read the Bible; should be impressed with an early knowledge and veneration of God; every Sunday they should be obliged to attend their master and mistress to the church." (P. 67.) I am charmed with this excellent plan. It breathes wisdom, prudence, humanity, benevolence, kindness, and the most refined charity to the children of men.

Pau. Troth Maister *Meanwell* so am I. Had but those there schools been in my young days I cou'd ha larnt any thing, thof I say it. My father cou'd read books and make figers: he was a fore scollard, that he was. As to religgon, to be sure we all know that well enof: let us but be honest and pay every one their own, and go to church now and then, as Matt. Mo-
ses

ses says, thas religgon enof for poor folks, as he says.

Gent. You have said enough *John*.—*Mr. Meanwell*, if agreeable to you we'll take a view of Doctor Burn's animated "pourtrait of" a petty Tyrant, commonly called "an Overseer."

Mean. I have seen the copy, Sir, drawn by your ingenious pencil.

Gent. Is it like the original?

Mean. I think the colouring in some parts too high, the shades in some others too gloomy: for instance, when we are told, "in practice the office of the Overseer seems to be this: to warn *the inhabitants* to hire *servants* half yearly, or by the month, by the week, or by the day, rather than by any way that shall give them a settlement; or if they do hire them for a year, then to endeavour to pick a quarrel with them before the year's end, and so to get rid of them—to bargain with some person to take them by the lump, who yet is not to take them, but to hang over them in *torrorem* if they should complain to the Justice—to send them out into the country a begging—to pull down cottages

“ges—to depopulate the parish in order
 “to lessen the Poor Rates.” (P. 21, 22.)
 In these particulars the Doctor has not flattered indeed, but rather injured the original. In some other respects I agree with you “the traits are just;” but they are so only with respect to unworthy individuals. You will not “insinuate that the
 “heart of every Overseer is narrowed
 “with—selfish, sordid policy.” (P. 24.)

End of the First Conversation.



The

The Second Conversation.

Gentleman.

THE better to convince you of the imperfections to be found in the Poor Laws, the cruelty and oppression of Overseers, and the necessity of Houses of Industry, “from *the former* considerations “*of the Managers*, let us now turn our “thoughts on the managed, and view “them in their hovels, those wretched “receptacles of suffering indigence. Humanity would wish to draw the veil of “silence over these squalid scenes of misery; but not to *disclose them* would be “to betray the cause I have undertaken “to plead, the cause of the infant, the “impotent, and the aged Poor.” (P. 24, 25.)

Mean. Had I the powers of Milton, the rhetoric of Harvey, the penetration of Mansfield, the eloquence of Pitt, the oratory of Glynn, and the knowledge of

I would really employ all my
 wealth in the same good cause: I would
 not, I do now, employ it with my
 usual heart. We agree that the Poor are
 entitled to have their rights to be better
 secured: we differ only about the mode
 of doing it. I would gladly have them en-
 joy the free air of
 the village, enjoy their favorite
 places, their parents, children, relations,
 friends and neighbours: in short, I would
 have them dwell wherever they
 please. But when the disease strips them of
 all their worldly privileges at a stroke:
 when we are forced to feed them better, to
 nurse them warmer, to lodge them easi-
 er, but yet always to be done in such a
 way as will inevitably break their hearts.

How is it possible they can change for
 the worse?—View them in their hovels:—
 There in desolate remoter parts are many of
 them, even in the roof like barns, with
 their old and flaming cobwebs pendant
 from the beams.—Few of them have any
 floor besides the naked earth.—The
 doors are open to let in the light, and let
 out the smoke—the windows—to admit
 the bleak and howling winds.—Their
 “ beds

“ beds are filthy masses of unsheltering
 “ rags,—many of them elevated from the
 “ bare earth only with a little rotten straw.
 “ In one room you shall find an aged
 “ couple, whose shivering limbs ach for
 “ want of better covering; contiguous to
 “ them a younger pair with three of their
 “ children in the same bed :—In the cor-
 “ ner of the same room a son and a daugh-
 “ ter, each arrived at the age of puberty,
 “ couched together.—In the same room
 “ lodges a decent man of eighty, hourly
 “ insulted by two wanton wenches, each
 “ holding to her breast the fruits of un-
 “ lawful love. One room contains three,
 “ sometimes four beds, with persons of
 “ different ages and sexes : One bed con-
 “ tains the husband, wife, and four chil-
 “ dren; two more lodged on straw; one
 “ bed contains the father, the mother, and
 “ two daughters, one of sixteen, the other
 “ of twenty years.” (P. 25; 26.) Now tell
 me are these shocking scenes of distress
 real, or will you say they are imaginary?

Mean. Some of the above instances are
 too notorious to escape even the eye of
 the careless observer; many others I must
 declare I never saw realized in life,
 tho

tho' I have been for more than twenty years past conversant with the village Poor; but I will not affirm they are not real because they never came to my knowledge. I have observed that not only the infant, the impotent, and aged Poor, but the able and industrious Poor also are in pitiable circumstance; that the number of "our starving, naked, unshelter'd Poor," (P. 31.) are a disgrace to our "interior police," a scandal to a great and free commercial nation, a reflection upon individuals in affluence, who can tamely behold the rueful state of their fellow creatures, and not endeavour to remove the causes of their complicated miseries. The instances most shocking to humanity are those the Poor endure in tenantries called Town Houses; they are occasioned as you have observed, by "the common and general abuse of the clause in the Stat. 43 of Eliz. which impowers the Overseers "to place more families than one in one "House." (P. 26) One step towards a reformation is, to repeal that pernicious clause in the Statute, and compel the respective Overseers to provide decent habitations for the impotent and aged Poor, in the
parishes

parishes where they have gained a settlement: the measure will be attended with some expence, but that will not hinder, you tell us, “ expence is the last consideration,” (P. 37.) and it is true it has been verified by this building age in ten thousand instances.

Gent. But in the mean time what do the unhappy wretches in their loathsome tenancies suffer? Tho’ “ many from 60 to “ 80 years of age are thought sufficiently “ favor’d by being placed *there*, and provided with a little damp turf, that smokes “ rather than burns; to those whom age “ and infirmities have intirely disabled “ from working, the common allowance “ is two-pence half-penny a day; and “ with this scanty pittance, the noblest “ work of God, wrapt in rags, distress’d “ with vermin, and tortur’d with rheumatic pains, drags on the unhappy remains “ of a life worn out in useful labour; “ whilst the old hunter now stiff and disabled for the chace, is valued for his “ past services, and enjoys at ease the rich “ luxuriance of the park.” (P. 26, 27.)

Pau. Thas all right Maister; a faggs I like t’hear ye. Why as you say, some folks

folks love their horses better than the Poor. But you forgot the dogs there, so I'll tell you about 'em. Why there's Maister *Mountsheer*, the French Gentleman of our town, he ha' got four of 'em, *Pug*, *Trollop*, *Sancho* and *Roufer*, who eat more left off vittals than wou'd serve my poor family. We ha' wish'd a mort o'times for the sweet bits thrown to those bacon-back'd vermine; asaggs I can't abide that there Maister *Mountsheer*; I wish he and his dogs at France agen, for I fear as how he shou'd spoil our English Gentlefolks, and larn 'em the French dog fatten fashion; eh! Maister.

Gent. " In recounting the distresses of
 " the Poor, I must not omit to observe,
 " that one short Statute, and one single
 " Clause, 13 and 14 Ch. II. c. 12. (p. 28.)
 " by departing from the simplicity of the
 " Act of 19 Hen. VII. has not only open'd
 " the door to all the subsequent litigati-
 " ons and inexplicable difficulties relating
 " to settlements and removals, but is a
 " dreadful engine of oppression to the in-
 " dustrious. Well therefore is it said to
 " be, a wanton or malicious chase of the
 " unhappy from one inhospitable region
 " to

“ to another! (p. 29.) The Statute of 8
 “ and 9 Will. c. 30. by allowing certifi-
 “ cates, with great tenderness endeavours
 “ to redress this barbarous cruelty; but
 “ as a parish cannot be compelled to grant
 “ a certificate, it is in the power of any
 “ Churchwarden to defeat the humanity
 “ of the Statute.”

Mean. It is so, Sir; but an easy reme-
 dy may be applied to prevent in a great
 measure the oppression complained of;
 that is, to allow the able and industrious
 Poor to reside in any city, parish or place,
 (subject only to examination) irremovea-
 ble until they become chargeable. Thus
 a door will be opened to encourage the
 active Poor, and a bridle put in the teeth
 of oppressive officers. I believe such an
 Act of late was under the consideration of
 the House of Commons, and it is much
 to be lamented it did not pass into a law.
 But settlements and removals will always
 have their collateral inconveniences.—
 Suppose Houses of industry should be-
 come more general, the Guardians would
 receive only such as had gained legal set-
 tlements in their respective districts, liti-
 gations on that head might then exist be-
 tween

tween House and House, between Hundred and Hundred; indigent individuals might then be chased "from one inhospitable region to another;" (p. 28.) tho' to do the observation justice, it must be acknowledged instances of that nature would not be so frequent.

Gent. I must insist upon it, Sir, "our Poor Laws are neither perfect, nor clear, nor easy to be understood;" (P. 30.) that the Poor are exposed to the greatest, the most alarming hardships and oppressions; that "some remedy, some timely remedy is necessary; humanity, religion, compassion, virtue, honour, decency, love to our brethren, the very frame of our composition, and bowels of our nature, (I use the words of Dr. Burn) call loudly upon us for some better regulation. (P. 31.)

Mean. I cordially agree with the Doctor and yourself Sir, in regard to the necessity of "some better regulation;" but the mode of regulation to be adopted at this crisis, is a matter in which perhaps the Doctor and you cannot agree together.

Gent. It may be so, but when plans differ as produced by different hands, it is prudent

prudent to chuse the best; we have a variety before us: " The great Chief Justice Hale—Sir Josiah Child—Mr. Davenant, Mr. Hay, Lord Hillsborough, Sir Rich. Lloyd, Mr. Fielding, the Doctor, and many other writers of great sensibility and penetration—have proposed their several plans of regulation to the public—none of these plans has been adopted. But at length the strong and manly understanding of the late Admiral Vernon, tempered by the gentle sensibility, and cautious prudence of a very worthy Clergyman now living, proposed a scheme to incorporate the parishes of the two hundreds of Colnies and Carlford, and to erect an House for the general reception and employment" (P. 32, 33.) of the Poor.

Mean. Was that plan carried into execution?

Gent. I have the pleasure to inform you it was, and the House was built " at Bulchamp" and " fitted up for the reception of the Poor " at Michaelmas 1766." (P. 37.)

Mean. How was it received by the public?

Gent. The lower sort of people could by no means relish it. You have heard, I suppose

pose, of the "clamours, confusion and riots, which were raised against the building of the House (p. 56.) — the largeness — and its numerous inhabitancy, (p. 33.) carried in it a certain idea of unweildiness to many, — and the certain expence of the building and furnishing, with the uncertainty of its correspondent utility, made it to be look'd upon as a very bold act."

Mean. If we consider the charter'd liberties, the few remaining comforts of the indigent Poor were staked on this great event; if we reflect, that, all ranks of people, that all ages and sexes, from the staff-supported veteran to the helpless infant smiling at the breast, that rising generations, millions yet unborn, are circumscribed by its influence, we must with the "many" above-mentioned, pronounce it A BOLD ACT indeed.

Gent. "It was so. The man that first constructed his little skiff, and committed it to the rude and merciless sea, (p. 33.) was a daring adventurer; but to the threefold brass about his breast, as the Poet expresses it, we owe the various blessings of improved navigation."

Mean. 'Tis true, Sir; but if a "daring adventurer" should arise, propose a scheme, and
execute

execute a plan that must unavoidably nâvigate you out of your chartered liberty into the port of certain poundage and imprisonment, you'd oppose the intruder, you wou'd lash the poet, you wou'd not hesitate to pronounce the daring adventurer had threefold brags, but wou'd insist upon it the Son of the Muses had mistaken the situation of the shining metal—I dare say you'd think he wore it higher than his breast; upon his f——d perhaps.

Henry III. of famous memory, gave for himself and his heirs for ever, by that most renowned charter held by every true Englishman the highest blessing, the most sacred and inviolable statute ever granted by a king to Britons; the many invaluable privileges of which we boast; one of which is Magna Charta, chap. 29. "No freeman shall be taken or imprisoned; or be—disseised of his freehold or liberties."

Edward I. in the 20th. year of his reign, confirmed the great charter; and these high advantages are supposed to be the unalienable right of every Englishman: Let us only imagine that some fell fav——te; fraught with the most arbitrary principles, should hereafter arise, gain the r——l ear, thrust himself into power, and by certain specious pretences, procure a law that no Englishman under the degree of a

D

Baronet

Baronet (other than such as act under commission from his Majesty) should dare to stir out of the bounds of their respective Hundreds, (a much larger scope than the bounds of an Industry House) without leave first obtained for that purpose from the Commissioners. Such a law would astonish the kingdom, would create at least some millions of patriots; would put the island in a general ferment; what clamours, uproars, confusions, threats, petitions, remonstrances, firebrands, arrows and death would be known in the land! Wilkes's General Warrants, the Middlesex Election, the Quebec Bill; and a thousand other matters of great importance would be lost in the general uproar: We should outdo the Americans in our struggle for liberty; death or redress would be the general motto, and a universal resolve to pursue the vile intruder to destruction. — And shall men thus born, thus principled, retrench, withhold, and take away the equally dear liberty of their indigent brethren? shall they impound, imprison their persons, only because they ARE POOR? Surely "the philanthropy of English Gentlemen" (p. 54.) cannot do this.

Gent. You can never play upon a tuneful string that so effectually charms the licentious public, "Liberty! the very word has music in it." (p. 50.)

Mean.

Mean. I hope, Sir, you are an Englishman, and shall not despair but it may have its charms for you.

Gent. "Its notes are frequently irregular and "wild, *but let me* endeavour to bring them "into harmony.—All men have by nature a "right to all things, liberty is the power of "exercising that right; this surely is not the li- "berty for which *you* contend." (p. 50.)

Mean. No, Sir, I shall not contend for liberty of that complexion; nor will you contend I presume, for your definition. I beg your pardon, when I tell you, that I think it a very queer one. If "by nature all men have a "right to all things," (p. 50.) then all things are every body's, and no body's! This being much above my comprehension, and little to my purpose, I leave the discussion of the point to abler casuists. The liberty I contend for, is the exercise of those rights contained in the original compact between king and people, one of which is the enlargement of our persons; and I say the well-behaved Poor ought to enjoy this right in common with the rich.

Gent. "The very idea of civil liberty sup- "poses restraint; not the restraint of the incon- "stant, unknown, uncertain, arbitrary will of "another; this is tyranny." (p. 50.)

Mean. Does it suppose that every member of the community must be restrained to keep within the bounds of his own house?

Gent. No—"but the restraint of such laws as the legislative power of the community shall have enacted, according to the trust reposed in it." (p. 51.)

Mean. Did our ancestors, do we ourselves; or shall our children after us, ever intrust our representatives with a power to coop us up, to imprison our persons, when we become poor?

Gent. Perhaps not. "But let us examine this closer. The inhabitants of these Houses are children, the impotent and the aged; that children ought to be under proper restraint will be acknowledged — infirmity and age are of themselves a confinement; but such as have the ability to go out, are never deny'd a proper liberty." (p. 51.)

Mean. Closer still, Sir. You told me just now, the restraint of the inconstant, unknown, uncertain, arbitrary will of another is tyranny; your Paupers in the House are all under this restraint; they cannot stir without the walls till they obtain leave of another; the will of another in this case is inconstant. One week you may go out; (if a complaint is lodg'd against you) the next you may not; 'tis "unknown, uncertain;

“uncertain,” the Pauper is not sure how long he shall enjoy his grant; 'tis “arbitrary,” 'tis entirely at the will of the grantor that they stir out at all; this then I think, according to you, is Tyranny. But suppose all the Poor to enjoy it in its full extent, to enjoy it continually, alas! whither should they go? should they wander abroad to mourn out their complaints, to tell the woods, the groves, the lofty trees, the purling streams, their sorrows? to tell them they are torn from the beloved places of their nativity, from their favourite abodes, ravish'd from the knees of their fathers, the bosoms of their mothers, the arms of their beloved children, the kindness of their dearest friends—poor solace this to detached mortals, consigned to the walls, or at most to the boundaries of an HUGE SEPULCHRE, and who have little more to expect than the intervention of a few tedious hours, without hopes of redress, till the icy hand of death shall consign them to eternity.

Gent. “As no human institution can be perfect, so it is generally the fate of those that come nearest to perfection to be most objected to.” (p. 46.)

Mean. If so much perfection is to be found in these new erected receptacles; if they are so advantageous, so friendly to the Poor,

whence their "unconquerable aversion" (p. 55.) to them?

Gent. The causes of this are various; "some are grown old in profligacy and licentiousness; these hate to be reformed." (p. 55.)

Mean. It does not appear that this new plan has a view or intention to reform them. You tell us, (p. 47.) "The impotent and the aged are collected together in these Houses, not the profligate and debauched; these ARE LEFT to the civil Magistrate and the Laws." Now, Sir, I look upon it "the profligate and debauched" are a greater "ulcer in our vitals;" (p. 31.) than the impotent and aged poor; an ulcer that will take advantage of your new institution to "ravage and diffuse its corruption thro' every part;" (p. 31.) these are the very persons who deserve the confinement your House prescribes, the "impotent and the aged" have not deserved it: And shall those be left at liberty to patrol the country, to prey upon the public? Shall those, to escape "the civil Magistrate, and severer laws," be suffered to roam abroad, "to fix themselves breathing statues of misery at our doors?" (p. 59.) You blame the Overseers for sending their Poor "out a begging," but under the new administration, we may expect to swarm with beggars,

beggars, to have "pin-boxes, needles, laces," (P. 23.) and such like wares at our doors every hour; and as these are the most likely to have "a moderate knack at stealing," (P. 23.) a door will be opened to support the worst of vagrants at the public expence. The hundreds that have Houses of Industry will be eased, and an additional expence will be saddled upon their good humoured neighbours.

Gent. You have a remedy at hand; you may "punish *them* with whipping; or confinement in the doleful Prison House." (P. 59.)

Mean. We pray to be excused; "the voice of polity may dictate" this, but you have taught us better: "humanity whispers he is a man, and religion inspires us in the midst of judgment to remember mercy." (P. 59.)

Pau. Well Maister *Meanwell*, you and the Gentleman have almost talk'd me out o'my wits: I wish my Nan was here to con the matter over wi'ye, for a faggs I knows not what to say nor I.

Gent. Have you any thing further to object?

Mean. I object further that your plan will be a means to "undomesticate people," (P. 40.) to weaken or destroy the mutual affections and assistance essentially necessary to the well being of families.

Gent.

Gent. Indeed! was “ this the case, did these Houses separate husband, wife, and child, whatever might be their advantages in other respects, they must be GIVEN UP, as subversive of the very foundation of civil society.” (P. 41.)

Mean. I believe they are; and if you’ll stake the issue upon proof of this, we’ll examine the point closer.

Gent. I tell you “ the fact is otherwise; many an husband disabled from labour by sickness, or maimed by accident, finds a comfortable asylum here; in the infirmary his wife however healthy and strong, attends him, a child perhaps in her arms, another at her knees. (P. 41.)

Mean. Give me leave to ask Sir, are you consistent with yourself? In one breath you tell me “ infirmaries are built at a proper distance, that the disease may not be communicated to others:” (P. 39.) “ The strong and healthy ought not to be here.” P. 42.) In another you say, “ in the infirmary *the wife of the sick man*, however healthy and strong, attends him, a child perhaps at her breast, another “ at her knees.” (P. 41.) Now how am I to understand you?—If the infirmaries are built at a distance, that the disease may not be communicated

nicated to others, 'tis hardly to be supposed that three healthy to one sick person are admitted. If they are not, the husband loses the comfort of the wife, the child of the parent, (and so on the contrary) when they stand most in need of it: And if this is not to "undomesticate people," to weaken or destroy the mutual affections and assistance necessary to the comfort and well being of families, I'll give up the point for ever.

Gent. In health however, "every married couple has a bed, and a room distinct and appropriated to themselves; their children if young are lodged in the same or the adjoining apartment; and indeed these decent lodgings for the married, constitute one of the most striking beauties of the House." (P. 41.) Besides, every individual upon admission is "stript, made perfectly clean, and decently habited; *here also* they are provided with wholesome and well dress'd food, in a liberal abundance; their beds are well cover'd and clean; the House and all its utensils neat. The children are at school from three to five years old." (P. 40.) "Light employments are adapted to the powers of each: of the aged no labour is required; the evening of their days is here made comfortable; *in short*, they are rescued from want, and consigned to respect and tranquillity." (P. 42.)

Mean.

Man. And yet notwithstanding the manifold advantages the Poor are said to receive from these Houses, I suppose they will not put their heads under the roof till the last extremity.

Genl. You are egregiously mistaken; "the experience of eight years have conquered all their prejudices, and they are now as fond of the House as ever they were averse to it:— "But this may be carried too far." (P. 56.)

Man. Yes, this may be carried so far as to sap its very foundation, to bring it down with its own weight. I look upon the general utility of these Houses, (waving all their inconveniences) and the well being of their numerous inhabitants, to depend upon these five things: 1. The wisdom, diligence, prudence and economy of the Guardians. 2. The saving of parish expences, nomination warrants, town meetings, journeys, appeals, removals, &c. 3. The work of the Poor employed in the House, 4. The advantage of having the Poor under one roof, by which they may be maintained cheaper than in separate hovels. And, 5. The "unconquerable aversion" (P. 55.) of the Poor out of the House. By these five pillars I conceive the whole building is chiefly supported. The first may stand for a few years; whilst the matter is new it is pleasing; Gentlemen as well

as others are fond of novelties; when old they cloy, become troublesome, tiresome, intolerable. Whenever this happens, if the Guardians have a power to farm out the Poor, (as I suspect they have) all is lost; these impounded Paupers will be under the iron hand perhaps "of some low born, selfish, surly ruffian, from whose sordid tyranny there is no appeal, no redress till the unhappy sufferers repose in the grave." The second can bear but little, very little weight. The third may defray the charge of the Governor, Surgeons, Apothecaries, repairs and firing. The fourth will defray a small part of the interest of the sums borrowed for erecting and furnishing the House. The last might do much, this and the first are the MAIN PILLARS, and if this in the short space of eight years is removed and taken quite away; if "they are now as fond of the House as ever they were averse to it," (P. 56.) it will most certainly follow, either that the Poor in and out of the House will be more distressed than before, or that the Poor Rates will be as high as ever.

Gent. I told you "this might be carried too far." (P. 56.)

Mean. Is it not carried too far already?—If the Poor have not only overcome their aversion, but are grown extravagantly fond of the House, they'll

they'll pour in upon you in surprizing numbers: It will be as necessary to lock your doors, and top up your walls, to keep them out, as it was before to keep them in; remove this bank and you have a sea. This will evidently appear if it is considered, that the expences of rural parishes in general do not arise merely from the support of the "impotent and aged Poor," (P. 47.) but partly from the indolent, partly from the frequent and real necessities of the married young, the strong, the healthy. If you cast your eye upon the accounts of sundry parishes, you will presently find the monies expended for the annual rents of labourers cottages, money at need, money for cloathing the healthy and strong Poor, for burying the dead, and providing firing for the living, (not collectors) when added together amounts to more perhaps than the sum of the weekly collection.

Genl. But "prudence directs us to cultivate "in the lowest minds a sense of the superiority "of honest industry;" (P. 56.) And I was thinking, "our improvements in agriculture, manufactures, trade, commerce, and the liberal "arts, have given the industrious Poor a support "beyond the comprehension even of Alfred's "enlarged ideas." (P. 3.)

Mean. The following animated description of the commendable poor man's support, will exhibit

hibit his situation in a clear point of view. "If
 "any of these temper'd of nature's finest clay;
 "and form'd in her favorite mould, emerges
 "from this sink of corruption, (I use the words
 "of the Rev. Mr. Potter) and by some happy
 "circumstance becomes a servant in a reputa-
 "ble family, where he acquires ideas of decen-
 "cy, frugality, and religion, what is the prof-
 "pect before him? one short sentence will ex-
 "press it; HE MUST WORK AND HE
 "MUST STARVE; every encouragement is
 "taken away. Our wiser forefathers left little
 "cottages, and little portions of land annexed
 "to them, as incitements to their servants; and
 "rewards of their good conduct. Our ruinous
 "parsimony has demolished these cottages, and
 "united their little precincts to the great farm,
 "which now, like Aarons rod, is become a
 "serpent, and has swallowed up all the rest,
 "leaving humanity as well as poetry, to lament
 "the deserted village." (P. 64.) Is this the sup-
 port so far above Alfred's comprehension?

Gent. I bear my testimony against depopulation.

Mean. I admire your testimony, but am not fond of your plan, it has a strong tendency to depopulate; if executed it will depopulate the village yet more. Instead of erecting new, and repairing

repairing the old, it will drain from the few remaining cottages their poor inhabitants; they must be emptied to fill the Industry Houses. It is big with the worst of consequential evils to the able, industrious little tradesmen, as it divests them at a stroke of the paupers custom, takes him away perhaps in their debt, deprives them of the profits of their trades, which they have the most indisputable right to receive, from those they are bound to support, shopkeepers, shoe-makers, bakers, butchers, malsters, tailors; innumerable industrious families, who have need of, who have right to the warmest encouragement, will be absolutely cast out of the question. The House will take their provision by the great contract with the draper, cheesemonger, butcher, butter-factor, malster, tailor; men of great capital may catch a job; men of small may fold their hands, may pay their rates, eat up their little stocks; and when all is spent, all exhausted, may follow their neighbours to break their hearts, to die in

AN HOUSE OF INDUSTRY.

Gent. If they cannot support themselves out, they are far better when in; there are good rooms, good beds, good fires, good cloaths, and good food in "a liberal abundance." Let us try if
your

your village Poor can vie with, can be compared to these in ease and plenty: Here is a “hopeful youth—he marries and enters the world with all the vivid ideas of love.—The first year brings him a child—the next another—the next another, and so on till now he finds the most unabated labour but ill supplies the necessities of his increasing family;—his wife too is ignorant and improvident—his children are ill fed, untaught, filthy, and in rags: he blames his wife’s misconduct; she recriminates, and the poor man wonders to find himself unhappy. Hence he repairs to the alehouse and drinks oblivion to his cares; he there mixes with the dissolute—by degrees becomes one of them;—at length we find him and his distressed family in one of those wretched tenancies, which the Overseer has legally provided for the miserable Poor.” (P. 65, 66.)

Pau. Thas all right, Maister what d’ye call ’em; my Nan had just two brave boys and a girl the first four years, we ha’ six now; and I ha’ had sore hard tugging to get ’em vitals, that I have; the Overseer ha’ now and than gan us a few shillings at needs, for we ha’ been a mort o’ times in sad extrefs; but howsomdever I wou’d never go to the tap-house to get drunk

drunk, not I, for we know as how tap-houses are the ruin of the nation:

Mean. If it be not in the power of your hopeful, decent, industrious, frugal, religious youth, with "the most unabated labour" (P. 65.) to support his family when only five or six in number, in what situation is pauper John and those who have a more numerous offspring. It is well known to every attentive observer, that thousands of the healthy, industrious Poor are * not able by their labour to procure the common necessaries of life; they are as you observe, Sir, working and starving: therefore to build Houses of Industry for the young, the impotent and aged Poor, (whether they are averse to or fond of it, whether it is good policy or bad, constitutional or otherwise) is at best but half a remedy: who shall help the industrious indigent Poor out of the House? will the Guardians refuse them their assistance? if so they are left still to their miserable tenancies, to "open roofs, "fluttering cobwebs, damp earth, rotten straw," (P. 25.) left still "to work and to starve;" in short, they will be in a situation abundantly worse than before, because it will not (then) be in the power of the Overseers to relieve them,

* See a pamphlet intitled, "Monopolizing Farms calmly considered, or a Plea for the Poor," sold by M. Booth, price 6d.

be they ever so willing; nor in the Magistrates to order them relief, the right of appeal being taken away.—Will they take them into the House? what shall we do without them? who shall perform our labour? who shall plough, sow, reap and thresh the fruits of the earth? what will they do with them? will they set them to work upon “flax, hemp, wool, thread, “iron, (P. 15.) &c. Alas they are poor artificers, most of “the village poor” (P. 15.) understand no more than “labour—in husbandry;” they can do but little service, yet they must be cloathed, lodged, warmed; they must eat too (for they don’t come here to work and to starve) “well dress’d food in liberal abundance.” (P. 40.) Oh! golden days, if they had but their liberty; but this will mar, will crush, will spoil your plan. Will they assist them out of the House? will they repair their cottages, brush down the cobwebs, mend the windows, advance the chimneys, take away their rags, and rotten straw? (for many, very many of the working Poor, who do not inhabit Town-Houses, are upon a level with others that do, in respect to habitation, cloathing, food, and lodging) Will they provide them with better cloaths and bedding, find them turf, damp or dry, or coals or wood? Will they pay their

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rents

rents, and allow them money upon sudden emergencies, (whilst they live) and bury them when they die? (as it is well known the officers are obliged thus to relieve and assist thousands, that are not upon the lists as weekly collectors.) Alas! the Guardians perhaps receive only a certain quarterly sum from each parish, they cannot do these things; or if they had power, and would do these things, the Poor's Rate would be as high or higher than before. There is only one avenue left to avoid a dilemma — When the industrious Poor have more children than they are able to maintain, they must take one, two, or more of them.—* Has the wife a long continued sickness? she must come into the House; the husband can work and support the rest, they must keep him out.—Is the husband sick or disabled? he must go—If the wife

* I have known more instances than one of this. The husband or wife being sick or infirm, have been hurried away to the Infirmary or Work-house; the healthy partner's left behind, nor is it in the power of the Guardians to compel them to follow: these have seized the favourable opportunity to marry again—have propagated a race of bigamitical bastards, whilst their lawful husbands and wives were confined within those walls, and pining away with weakness. If instances of the above nature are weighed against political marriages made up by Overseers, p. 63. the balance may be pretty equal; shall I bid "the intelligent" reader observe, that Houses of Industry hold out a remedy for "this evil" also?

can

can live out, she may stay behind — But she loves him, she will not leave him in distress, she's "healthy and strong," (P. 41.) and she will follow him — Hail! true partner of his sorrow, sharer of his affliction, faithful amongst women, hail! — Had I gleaned from the plural top of Parnassus, cropped from the beautiful bowers of rhetoric and eloquence their choicest flowers, I would go before thee, I would strew them in the way — I pause — Thou worthy in rags — I pause, to hail thee with redoubled strength — All hail! — She will follow him — she may, but he will be lodged "at a distance in the infirmary — The healthy and strong ought not "to be there." (p. 39.) After all, she will lose her labour, but will not be the only loser. The two Hundreds will lose 10,000*l.* the expence of building and furnishing the House; and you, Sir, will lose the House itself; for you have announced "If these Houses separate husband, "wife and child — they must be GIVEN UP "as subversive of the very foundation of civil "society." (p. 41.)

Pau. Tha's all right, Maister *Meanwell*; those thare Houses are sore things, as you say; why they part us from wives and babes and all; sie upon 'um, sie upon 'um all, say *John*, part husband and wife, quotha; why I woudn't

part with my *Nan* for all the world, that I wouldn't.

Mean. To conclude, Sir, having fairly got rid of the new-intended administration, let us now see what may be done for the Poor under the old.

Their present miseries and distresses arise from various causes, some of which you have noticed, others you have overlooked. I cannot believe the sordid policy, or rather low cunning of such Overseers as are mean enough to hatch marriages, to yoke a few wretched individuals together for the purpose of easing their parish expences, can be productive of such general evils; nor can I think the Poor "in general" are "idle, dishonest, and dissolute," a "disgrace — and burden to the community." (p. 63.) I have found amongst the Poor, men of strict honesty, chastity, unwearied industry, constant temperance and sobriety; nor can I think their children "in general—trained up in ignorance—unprincipled in any school but that of laziness, pilfering, and vice, untinged with any sense of decency or religion." (p. 63.) Indeed it sometimes happens that neither the parents nor children have much "sense of — religion," but whenever this is observed, the Reverend Pastors who have the charge of their souls, should double their labours, use their utmost

most efforts to bring them to a sense of their duty. It is a duty incumbent on all to promote the present and future well-being of the Poor. But as we have long dwelt upon the first of these, you will pardon this necessary digression, and permit me to return to the former subject. The demolishing of cottages, and laying their precincts to the large farm, is certainly a capital grievance, big with the worst of consequences. The general luxury of the age, the efforts of the trading part of the people to ape high life, to stand upon a level with their superiors, shed their baneful influence on the poor cottager, as they not only place in his view examples of improvidence and looseness of manners, but also affect the price of provision, which is now so disproportionate to the price of labour, that the Poor are kept at too low an ebb. You have rightly observed, "encouragement" is the soul of industry; if a poor man could once say, "this cow—is MY OWN," he would find "more music in those two short words, than in all the notes of Rossignole." (p. 71.) But this music is but seldom heard in the honest labourer's "domain." It is a melancholy fact, the Poor have no property, therefore they have no courage; they despair. The great number of Alehouses are strong temptations

temptations in the way of the burdened labourer; so soon as his spirit sinks under the load of complicated hardships, which his unabated labour is not able to remove, he flies here to drink and drown sorrow, though by so doing his wretched case becomes still worse: But above all, the contempt or neglect of Religion, so often to be found, not only in many of the poor, but in some who move in more exalted directions, fixes them to their vices, and encourages them in carelessness. If therefore the Legislature, if the "Gentleman, the Friend, the Patron, the Protector, of this truly valuable class of men," (p. 70.) will exert themselves in their favour, it is not impossible to help them, to put them upon a commendable footing. Let those Statutes, or Clauses of Statutes, that bear hard upon, or that are engines of oppression to them, be amended or repealed; let the supernumerary alehouses, "the infernal mansions—whence the demons of famine and distress issue, like a strong man arm'd, to desolate the cottages of the hamlet, or the streets of the city," (p. 62.) be silenced: the Magistrates, upon proper complaint made, have power by the laws now in force to do the last; they can also keep a watchful eye over such of the Overseers as are cruel and oppressive; can correct innumerable

merable abuses; and as they are the great barrier between suffering Paupers and certain destruction, I doubt not but they will do these things, and much more. The many instances that have come under my observation in the course of many years, have convinced me, that the worthy Magistrates in their public capacity, are the **BEST FRIENDS** the Poor ever had, (since the days of Elizabeth) now have, or are ever like to have; and I sincerely wish they may never be dismantled of their respected authority. Let the demolished cottages be rebuilt, their little precincts restored, the parish schools established; industry encouraged, charity recommended, and, to crown the whole, let our Reverend Divines exert themselves in the functions of their most important office; let them labour in earnest for the good of souls, lay aside momentary trifles and soothing amusements, to watch with all diligence over their respective flocks; let them lift up their voices like trumpets, be instant in season and out of season, to preach the Gospel of our gracious God, our risen Saviour, our present Comforter; let them attend their charge, not only in the churches, but also from house to house, daily teaching, exhorting, and rebuking, with all long suffering and authority; let them watch over the healthy
and

and strong, pray with the sick and weak, catechise the ignorant and young, and set an example of godliness, righteousness, temperance, sobriety, gentleness, meekness, and holiness, to all; this will have a most noble effect, will produce more substantial good, than all our Statutes made for the suppression of vice, and encouragement of virtue: Let these things, I say, be done, breathing statues of misery shall no more offend the eye, pitious cries of complaint shall no more pierce the ear in our streets: the Poor shall lift up their heads with comfort, shall enjoy their former privileges unmolested: Religion, the source of every real blessing, shall flourish in our land, in our families, in our hearts: In short, Sir, all shall be well, without the intervention of severer laws, or the soft sung administration of

HOUSES OF INDUSTRY.

F I N I S.

